United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Distr.
GENERAL

TD/B/AR.542
16 March 1981

Original: ENGLISH

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Twenty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 549th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 16 March 1981, at 11 a.m.

President: Mr. TARNOFF (United Kingdom)

CONTENTS

General statements (continued)

Implementation of Trade and Development Board resolution 165 (S-IX) on the debt and development problems of developing countries

Sixth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development: place, date and duration

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.6108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the meetings of the Board at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.81-51350

The meeting was called to order at 3.4 p.m.

GENERAL STATEMENTS (continued)

1. Mr. PEUT (Czechoslovakia) said that the industrially-developed capitalist States continued to be a focus of economic disturbance. Since the fifth session of the Conference and the twenty-first session of the Board, those countries had suffered further cyclical crises in production, together with unchecked inflation, increased unemployment and a considerable deceleration in the growth of foreign trade. The acute nature of those phenomena in the industrially-developed capitalist countries had a considerable influence on the economies of other countries and further complicated the efforts of developing countries to build up their economies and raise the living standards of their people. The developed capitalist countries were seeking a way out of their economic difficulties with no regard for the economic interests of other countries, thus destabilizing the development of international economic co-operation and undermining the successful efforts made in that direction. International economic co-operation was also being jeopardized by the arms race. There was an urgent need to enhance UNCTAD's role in dealing with such problems.

2. He drew particular attention to the question of protectionism, the importance of which had been emphasized by the socialist countries of Group D on numerous occasions. Protectionist measures had been intensified in recent years. They had assumed new forms and were being applied by new methods which were impeding the normal development of international trade and worked against the interests of the developing countries in particular. A number of such measures contravened agreements or treaties. It had rightly been brought to the attention of the Committee on Manufactures at its ninth session that the restrictions on products from developing countries and socialist countries which were being applied by the market economy countries would have a detrimental effect on exports. UNCTAD's role in combating the further use of such measures in international trade should be strengthened, and the appropriate UNCTAD forums should consider the problem of least once a year, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions.

3. The growing crisis in the capitalist world and the industrial development policies of the capitalist countries were adversely affecting the financial position of most developing countries, whose growing debt burden was slowing down the pace of their development. On the question of the debt position of those countries the Group D countries maintained the position they had indicated at the ninth session of the Board. The problem could be solved by restructuring international economic relations on a basis of justice and democracy and by eliminating the last vestiges of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

4. The financial co-operation of the socialist countries with developing countries was carried out on socialist economic bases, which differed from the relations of the capitalist countries with developing countries. Economic and technical co-operation was applied by the socialist countries in the interest of growth of the productive capacity of developing countries, improved utilization of their natural resources and creation of the necessary infrastructure. It was carried out through inter-governmental agreements, which made it possible to settle problems to mutual benefit, to consider debt relief possibilities and to take into account the particular circumstances of the developing countries concerned. The socialist countries intended to continue their co-operation in that direction.

8. His delegation welcomed the report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on the implementation of section A of Board resolution 165 (S-IX). That report indicated that several developed donor countries had excluded some least developed countries from their programmes of debt cancellation. The reluctance of certain developed countries to comply with UNCTAD decisions was evident that they had never had any real intention of abandoning the privileged relationship enjoyed by them by the existing system. Ethiopia greatly appreciated, however, the measures which had been taken towards it by the Governments of Italy, Sweden, Japan and especially Finland, which, in addition to implementing resolution 165 (S-IX), had extended its coverage to other development credits. His delegation regretted the discriminatory measures taken by some Group B countries against Ethiopia and reiterated his Government's appeal to the developed countries concerned to cancel Ethiopia's indebtedness to them. The proposal of bilateral negotiations in that connection was unacceptable to Ethiopia as it was contrary to the Board's agreed objective.

9. In conclusion, he asked the Board to decide to keep the implementation of its resolutions 165 (S-IX) and 222 (XXI) under review and to include the subject in the agenda for its twenty-third session as a priority item. He considered that the Secretary-General of UNCTAD should be requested to submit for that session an assessment of measures taken by developed countries, together with his conclusions and recommendations for appropriate action.

SIXTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT: PLACE, DATE AND DURATION (agenda item 6) (TD/B/943, TD/B/944)

10. The PRESIDENT said that the General Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 34/196, had requested the Board at its twenty-first session to recommend the date, place and duration of the sixth session of the Conference, bearing in mind the offer made in that regard by the Government of Cuba. At its twenty-first session, the Board had decided to defer making a recommendation until its twenty-second session, stating that in making its recommendation the Board would take into account the offer made by Cuba during its tenth special session to host the Conference, which offer had been reiterated at the fifth session of the Conference. In that connection, he drew the Board's attention to documents TD/B/943 and TD/L/244 which had been circulated at the request of the Governments of Cuba and of the United States of America, respectively.

11. Mr. VIERA LINARES (Cuba) said that he represented a country which was a founding member of the United Nations and as such had full rights to vote, hold office and host meetings. Since 1959, its people had been deciding their own destiny, free of neo-colonialist tutelage. The Cuban Government was devoted to the cause of eliminating the scourge of war and promoting human rights and social and economic progress. It also believed in the sovereign equality of all States, great and small, and in international co-operation to solve the major problems of mankind. For that reason, it was resolved to play an increasingly active part in the work of the United Nations and in that spirit it had, at the fifth session of the Conference, offered the city of Havana as the venue for the Conference's sixth session.

12. As was recognized in document TD/B/943, Cuba possessed adequate facilities in the way of conference buildings, hotels and communications to host that session and it was ready to supplement its present facilities with additional meeting rooms and offices for the Conference secretariat. It was also prepared to cover the additional expenses UNCTAD would incur by holding the sixth session of the Conference

19. Mrs. BELLILI-TECHIN (Algeria) said that her delegation had noted that there should be discussion of a country's offer to act as host for a session. Such a discussion had never occurred in respect of previous UNCTAD meetings held, in fact, even, refusal of an invitation constitutes the worst possible offence. She hoped that, as a result of consultations, the Board, as the decision-making body, would be able to find a solution without yielding to blackmail from any quarter. UNCTAD had hosted many important conferences, which Algeria had always been glad to attend.

17. Mr. ZEWDIE (Ethiopia) said that since the Group of 77, at its Arusha meeting, had noted with satisfaction the Cuban Government's invitation to host the sixth session of the Conference, the matter had come up at the fifth session of the Conference and at the tenth special and twenty-first sessions of the Board. Furthermore, document TD/B/843 contained a positive report from the mission sent to Cuba to investigate the facilities available there. It seemed that the Board had before it all the necessary information to reach a decision and he urged that no difficulties should be put in the way of its being so.

18. Mr. PUHOVA (Czechoslovakia), speaking on behalf of Group D, said that the group supported the proposal that the sixth session of the Conference should be held in Havana. The Cuban Government's invitation had been welcomed by the majority of member countries, including those of Group D and of the Group of 77. The situation had been reflected in Conference resolution 107 (V) and in General Assembly resolution 34/196. As could be seen from document TD/B/843, all the necessary requirements for holding the sixth session of the Conference in Havana were met. Group D wished to thank the Government of Cuba for its invitation, and it saw nothing to prevent the Board from taking a decision on the matter at the present session.

19. Mr. SAKER (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation, too, was surprised that the choice of venue for the sixth session of the Conference should be the subject of discussion in the Board. It was of the opinion that Cuba met all the necessary conditions for acting as host to the Conference. The Group of 77 had met in Havana, and Cuba had demonstrated its ability to host large conferences. The Syrian delegation would therefore be honoured to attend the sixth session of the Conference in that country.

20. Mr. YU Peiyan (China) said that his delegation attached importance to the choice of venue for the sixth session of the Conference. Careful consideration should be given to that question in order to ensure the success of that session.

21. UNCTAD was the major economic and trade forum of the United Nations and had the important mandate of holding negotiations. It should therefore encourage developed and developing countries alike to participate in discussions of the problems of international trade and development with a view to reaching solutions through common efforts. The choice of venue for the sixth session therefore assumed considerable importance and the difficulties that various parties might encounter could not be overlooked. If those difficulties could not be eliminated and all members of UNCTAD could not participate in the session, the result would be a lack of universality and the progress of negotiations would be difficult to ensure. Such a possibility might, moreover, have negative effects on the future of UNCTAD.

22. His delegation therefore appealed to all the members of the Board to bear in mind the general interests of UNCTAD and to select, through full consultations or by consensus, a venue acceptable to all concerned.

25. Mr. ERDENECHIMEG (Mongolia) said that, in his opinion, there was no point in holding lengthy discussions under agenda item 5 or in introducing political considerations. The representative of Cuba had stated that his country had offered to act as host to the Conference at the ninth session. The Mongolian delegation therefore appealed to all members of the Board not to be prepared to go on to accept that invitation.

26. Mr. MACNEILL (Canada) said that, although his Government was of the opinion that every member of the Board was, in accordance with normal United Nations practice, entitled to offer to act as host to the ninth session of the Conference, it was concerned because the offer made by Cuba had given rise to considerations that might hamper the success of the Conference, which played a very important role as a forum for the North-South dialogue. It was sure that all the regional groups, which were entitled to the outcome of that dialogue, recognized the importance of avoiding action at the present session of the Board which might hamper the prospects for a successful Conference session in 1979. His delegation therefore associated itself with the view that a decision on the place where the ninth session of the Conference was to be held should be taken by consensus and that the Board should continue to reflect on the matter. The President of the Board and the Secretary-General of UNCTAD might use their good offices to ensure that a satisfactory solution was reached by consensus.

27. Mr. THORN (Norway) said that the situation which had developed as a result of the discussion of agenda item 5 at the present meeting had rightly given rise to concern. In that connection, he drew attention to the essential role played by UNCTAD in the North-South dialogue and to the importance of reaching by consensus a decision on the venue for the ninth session of the Conference. He therefore appealed to all members of the Board to continue their consultations on the question.

28. Mr. KOSAYASHI (Japan) said that his delegation shared the view that the discussion which had taken place under agenda item 5 was unusual and somewhat unfortunate, particularly since it related to an important issue and since Conference resolution 107 (V) had been adopted by consensus. He had, moreover, been given to understand that the Government of Cuba was concerned more about the success of the ninth session of the Conference than about the place where it was to be held. That was certainly the right approach. He therefore suggested that further consultations should be held with a view to reaching a consensus of views on the issue.

29. The PRESIDENT said it was quite clear that the Board had not completed its discussion of agenda item 5 and that it was now its responsibility to guide the work of the Board so that it might produce the desired results. He would therefore seek the views of delegations on the matter. In the meantime, he suggested that the Board might leave the question aside and revert to it at a later meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.